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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "1938 RESEARCH IN HOME ECONOMICS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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A short time ago, when our Washington correspondent reviewed the report of the Secretary of Agriculture, picking out the types of work of especial interest to homemakers, she promised to write us in more detail about the work of the Bureau of Home Economics. Today's letter from our reporter is filled with interesting highlights from the annual report of Dr. Louise Stanley, chief of the bureau.

She writes:

"About half of Dr. Stanley's report is taken up with the Consumer Purchases study. I have written you about that from time to time. The study, you will doubtless remember, covers 66 farm counties, 140 villages, and 19 small cities, scattered the length and the breadth of the United States. Several other Washington agencies cooperated with the Departments of Agriculture and Labor in making the study.

"Median incomes are used in making comparisons, rather than averages. By median is meant that half the families reporting in a given area had less than the median income, and half had more. Thus the median income for native-white village families was \$1100 a year. This varied in different parts of the country, of course, but it shows that a great many families manage to get along with a relatively small amount of money. For 10 of the 19 small cities studied the median income of native-white families was below \$1250 a year, although four cities in the Pacific Northwest had a median income around \$1555.

Some of the village families and all of the farm families had part of their income in the form of food, fuel, and other things raised on the farm. The value of this 'non-money income', as it is called, was included in the total income. City families had so little home-raised food it was not included as income.

"Twenty-three farm sections were chosen to represent production of the country's principal agricultural products. The net yearly median income of these families, all headed by native-born white operators, was \$1587. But this was 'in cash and in kind', meaning that the garden vegetables, firewood, ice, value of occupying the farm home, and other items were included. From \$321 in California to \$668 in North Carolina was reported as 'non-money income'. So the cash available for family living was relatively small in amount.

"The lower the yearly income, the more important are the home-raised supplies, especially the protective foods. As income increases, farm families pay their debts and increase their net worth by getting better farm equipment, improving the farm buildings and the home.



"Dr. Stanley believes that 'the well-being of the human race is determined by its food habits. A diet containing adequate amounts of all the food essentials is an important factor in health.' And so the bureau's division of foods and nutrition is constantly engaged in research centering on the nutritive needs of man."

"For this reason, one of the interesting studies of the past year was on the adult requirement for vitamin A, and the connection between a lack of this vitamin and inability to see well in a dim light, - 'nutritional night-blindness', as it is called."

"Again, consumers are constantly asking for information about the vitamin content of commercially canned foods, such as tomato juice. A study to compare the vitamin C content of commercially canned tomatoes and tomato juice showed both to be good sources of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), even though there was variation in ascorbic acid content from can to can of the same brand and from brand to brand. The samples of canned tomatoes varied less in ascorbic acid content than did the canned tomato juice."

"Studies on the vitamin C content of home-canned tomatoes show that there was no loss of vitamin C under the processing methods used. Home-canned tomatoes stored at ordinary room temperature for six months suffered 30 to 50 percent loss of vitamin C. Commercially canned juice and fresh orange juice stored in the refrigerator below 45 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 or 3 days showed no appreciable loss of ascorbic acid."

"Results in cooking carrots and spinach indicate that if not overcooked these vegetables retain practically all of their vitamin B₁ content, (now often called thiamin), but that as some of it is in the cooking water, it is important that this juice be served along with the cooked vegetable."

"Here's another point, about minerals in vegetables. The very green leaves are richer in calcium and iron. Green cabbage, either savoy or the green, non-heading varieties, is apparently the richest in calcium among cabbage, lettuce and spinach but spinach exceeds in total iron."

"Other food studies covered the best kind of egg whites for leavening angel food and other sponge cakes; studies of fats for shortening; studies of the cooking quality of beef, lamb, pork, turkeys, frozen chickens, different varieties of potatoes, and soybeans."

"But the bureau's work includes much besides foods. The textile and clothing staff is continuing to work for more informative labels, and has recommended definite classifications for different qualities of towels, sheets, broadcloth for men's shirts, upholstery fabrics, and blankets."

"You may have heard of the measurements that are being made on about 90,000 children between 4 and 14 years old, by means of which the bureau hopes to find a better basis than age for sizing children's ready-made garments or patterns. Perhaps some day we shall buy children's clothes by the height and maybe hip or chest measure of the child. Almost anything would be better than age, now used as the basis for sizing children's clothes."

"Homemakers are constantly asking for information on cooking equipment and fuels and there have been a number of studies in this field. Unfortunately, however, I must leave them for another time."

This concludes our Washington letter for today.

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